MONTHLY NOTICES

OF THE

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY.

On Al-Sūfi and Ptolemy's Catalogues.   By Prof. H. C. F. C. Schjellerup.

(*Extract from a Letter to Mr. Knobel.*)

" Having read your article in the number for June last of the *Monthly Notices*, and especially your remarks (page 419) on the great care which has always been taken by the scribes in ruling the necessary columns for entering the catalogues of stars in the two MSS. of Al-Sūfi at the British Museum and in the India Office Library, I am afraid that you use these MSS. in a perfectly wrong manner. The star magnitudes in these catalogues are evidently encumbered with slips of the pen and frequent forgetfulness of the qualifying letters.

" My own ' Tableau synoptique' as well as ' les grandeurs' in the special catalogues are only based on the ' description' which precedes the catalogue, where the magnitudes are expressed in *words*. If, therefore, the statements of the magnitudes in the MSS. in question are to be compared, it must be done exclusively by having recourse to the ' description.' In this way all my statements in the ' Tableau synoptique' can be controlled, even if by a misprint they should not be in conformity with the statement in the special catalogue. For instance, when (page 421) you meet with 3-2 for No. 4 *Cygni*, and you see that the catalogue contains 3, by turning to page 79 in my book you will be convinced that the catalogue is wrong, for the description says, ' elle est des grandes de la troisième grandeur.'

" I take this opportunity to complain of a remark of yours in the *Monthly Notices*, January last, page 149.

" ' Professor Schjellerup, in his Al-Sūfi, gives Ptolemy's cor-

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rect description to the stars in question, and also to the red star *α Tauri*, but he appends the Arabic word الكْوصي, which he translates "rouge," or "rougeâtre." Dr. Rieu, the Keeper of Oriental MSS. at the British Museum, and Dr. Redhouse inform me *there is no such Arabic word implying colour.* In fact, Professor Schjellerup translates the word as it ought to be, his Arabic MS. having an untranslatable word.'

"Dr. Redhouse is here in error. Turn up only Freytagii Lexicon Arabico-Latinum, s.v. خوص, and you will find 'ornavit laminis aureis (coronam).' I think that a designation of *α Tauri* as a 'golden' star is more proper than Dr. Redhouse's 'chest complaint look' about the same star.

"I should be glad if you would kindly cause the above to be inserted in an early number of the *Monthly Notices.*

"*Copenhagen :*
1885, Sept. 23."

Note on the above. By E. B. Knobel.

The remarks on page 419 of the June *Notices* quoted by Professor Schjellerup were not intended to be limited to MSS. of Al-Sūfi, but to apply to all the Oriental MSS., both Arabic and Persian, of Ptolemy, Al-Sūfi, and Ulugh Beigh, which I had examined. The object of the paper was *solely* to show that in these MSS. errors of transcriber and translator are so frequent and so rife that we are not yet in a position to assume that any differences we find in the star magnitudes of Al-Sūfi and Ulugh Beigh may not be due to such errors.

Professor Schjellerup takes exception to my remarks (p. 149 of the January *Notices*) on his translation of the Arabic word الكْوصي as "rouge" or "rougeâtre."

The word خوص, which he gives as his authority from Freytag, is one which I had carefully considered and discussed with Dr. Redhouse when preparing the paper. I hardly think that his translation of it as "golden" can be at all sustained. The noun خُوص means "the leaves or the fronds of the date palm," and the verb خوّص (with reduplication of the second letter) means "put forth leaves (the tree)." In Lane's dictionary the sentence in Freytag, quoted by Professor Schjellerup, is thus given : "he ornamented (the crown) with plates of gold of the width of palm leaves." The use of the word خوص here refers to the *shape*, and not to any colour. I think it extremely unlikely that the solution of the difficulty can be found in the word خوص as the authorities I have consulted do not agree with Professor Schjellerup that it can be used in a sense implying colour.